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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000700

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SUBJECT: PRT FARAH: SEMI ANNUAL REPORT ON SECURITY,
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION

Classified By: POLCOUNSELOR SROSENBERY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Incidents and attacks continue and security remains tenuous and uncertain, but the police now show a heightened presence with patrols and raids in Farah Province. Governing dynamics will be seriously affected as Farah deals with its third governor in less than six months. The Provincial Development Committee (PDC) must write a Provincial Development Plan. Poppy grows well in the dry desert environment and is a leading source of income in the province. There is a vital need for both foreigners and Afghans to be able to coordinate, communicate, and cooperate with each other, and to reach consensus and foster Afghan ownership in reconstruction and development. End Summary.

Security Assessment

¶2. (SBU) Over the past six months, incidents and attacks continued, and security remained tenuous and uncertain, but the Farah police now show a heightened presence with patrols and raids. In general, people say they feel security has improved since demonstrations in September protesting the lack of security. Local politics also played a role. Ever since President Karzai removed former governor Wasifi in August, Chief of Police Brigadier General Agha and the ANP have worked in concert with the ANA to improve Farah's security posture. Wasifi had done his best to undermine Agha, but with Wasifi's departure, Agha immediately increased raids, arrests and weapons confiscations. The PRT-mentored Provincial Coordination Center (PCC) worked closely with all Afghan Security forces and the ANA to collect and disseminate intel, monitor operations, and assist special event security coordination.

¶3. (SBU) Kabul authorized an auxiliary police force to man a series of checkpoints on the Ring Road from Delarom (newly added to Farah from Nimroz Province) to the Herat border in order to strengthen security in the wake of multiple hijackings. The extension of territory in this large and

undeveloped province is stretching security resources even more thinly. Hijackings and criminal activities continue, as do reported Taliban attacks on ANP and ANA. Security forces have discovered a number of IEDs and fielded numerous threats. UNAMA has delayed opening an office in Farah until the province is deemed safe.

Political and Governance Assessment

¶4. (C) The most recent change in Farah,s governor will seriously affect governing dynamics as Farah deals with its third governor in less than six months. Former governor Wasifi left in August. Governor Stanikzai, named in September to replace Wasifi, suffered a stroke which delayed his arrival until October. On November 20 he had a second stroke and left Farah for medical treatment. He returned January 5 with no idea the MOI would shortly replace him. Mawlawi (Mullah) Muidien Baluch, one of Karzai,s religious advisors, has been named Farah,s next governor. (Embassy note: Deputy NSA Ibrahim recently told DCM that Baluch is being placed in Farah in part to send a message to Iran. A long-time critic of Iran and known as fearless, his presence is meant to help stop Iran from using Farah as a corridor for influence in Afghanistan. End Embassy note.)

¶5. (SBU) PRToff meets often with the Provincial Council (PC) to discuss the members' duties and responsibilities as the province,s only elected local officials. She also speaks with local officials to promote their coordination of efforts and communication with each other, the PRT/Civil Affairs (CA), USAID, and NGOs. Local government officials seem

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entirely too dependent at this time on foreigners to make governance decisions. They are also very dependent on their governor. For example, the PDC refused to meet without the governor present. The governor,s office has been vacant too often in the last six months, resulting in a slowdown of provincial governance.

¶6. (SBU) The Provincial Development Committee (PDC), composed of representatives from line ministries and various NGO,s, must write a Provincial Development Plan. With PRT assistance the PDC and PC, when brought a number of individual wish lists given to the PRT/CA, did put together a priority list from which the PRT could consult as they considered how to spend money. Although all approved the priorities, including the governor, it is still just a list. The Afghans are dependent on the PRT/CA, USAID, the UN, NGOs, and even the Iranians to provide aid, ideas, funds, and projects.

¶7. (SBU) At the last PDC meeting, former Governor Stanikzai (who worked many years with the Afghan Development Association), stressed the importance of the plan per se rather than having individuals (including government officials) just going to the PRT to ask for pet projects from their &shopping lists.8 He actually assigned them to start working on the plan and an Interior Ministry official from Kabul, posted in Farah as the Afghan Stabilization Program provincial advisor, met with some PDC members the day after the PDC meeting to start work with them on a plan. Before Stanikzai arrived in Farah Province, the PDC, when told how important it was to have a provincial strategy, responded that they would ask the PRT, UN and local NGOs to make one for them. With this dependence on others, it has been difficult to build Afghan responsibility and decision-making by consensus.

Reconstruction and Development

¶8. (SBU) Both the PRT/CA and USAID have put a great deal of money into projects in Farah. USAID funding built the Ring

Road and road spur from the main road to Farah City. Other projects include schools, school walls, a courthouse, a bank, and a women,s affairs center. The PRT/CA funds a variety of reconstruction projects, including digging wells, building roads, structures, and providing humanitarian assistance. The province receives money in six districts under the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and according to the RRD line director, of the 688 projects planned since receiving funds, 324 are completed. Projects range from schools and wells to literacy courses.

¶9. (SBU) PRT/CA was first off the mark to provide humanitarian assistance for flood victims in November. The PCC communicated with flood-affected areas, identified losses and obtained information for PRT/CA on support needed. However, the two truckloads PRT/CA gave to the RRD director to distribute were never given to flood victims. The RRD director, who works directly with PRT/CA on most projects, held on to the supplies and reportedly the aid might be used in Farah City. The PRT is helping the Red Crescent build a system for humanitarian assistance distribution and accountability.

Economic/Social Assessment

¶10. (SBU) Poppy grows well in the dry desert environment and is a leading source of income in the province. On January 22 the ANP officially started the governor,s eradication program. However, recent rains and intentional flooding of fields hampers the use of tractors to destroy the plants.

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¶11. (SBU) Modern infrastructure is limited. There is no electricity except that which generators provide. Tortuous trips on roads of sand lead to villages where there are no services and little water for agriculture, though this year has seen increased rainfall after several years of severe drought. Irrigation canals have been allowed to deteriorate and there is no way in many places to capture this winter rain. With few jobs available, men go to Iran, Pakistan, Herat, Kandahar, and other city centers to find work to support their families. Schools and clinics can be found in district centers, though they are not necessarily staffed with professionals. With security concerns, some schools remain closed or are poorly attended. Women are employed in government, as teachers and nurses, or by NGOs, but do not work in the private sector. Women in villages are rarely seen outside the home.

¶12. (SBU) The justice system is limited, so many of those being arrested do not make it to court. In one recent month, for example, judges heard only six cases and reached no decisions. Currently there are 190 people in prison, and although juvenile offenders and females are housed elsewhere, among the male prisoners there is no separation of the violent from the non-violent, or between those sentenced and those still awaiting trial. Rule of law programs/judicial assistance are lacking in Farah Province, and are much needed.

¶13. (SBU) Comment: With the scope and range of the PRT/CA, USAID, NSP, RRD, ASP, and NGOs plans and projects, the situation in Farah begs for an improved coordination mechanism. Each group seems to communicate only with a limited number of others and then spends the money on what are determined to be worthwhile projects. The result is a hodgepodge of reconstruction, addressing short term needs without full thought to rational development and long term planning. For instance, some areas have multiple schools while other places have none. Wells are needed all around the province but seem to be clustered in certain areas more than others. The requirement for a real Provincial Development Plan is critical. The need for both internationals and Afghans in Farah Province to coordinate,

communicate, and cooperate with each other, and to reach consensus and foster Afghan ownership in reconstruction and development is vital. End Comment.

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